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Fear and Media: The Relationship Between Crime Related Television Consumption and the Fear of Crime Among Americans

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The Relationship between Crime Related Television Consumption and Fear of Crime among Americans

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: The Relationship between Crime-related Television Consumption and Fear of Crime among Americans.

OBJECTIVE: Identify whether there is a direct correlation between crime-related television, fear of crime, and the concern for internet related problems.

METHODS: Non-institutional adults (ages 18+) residing in the United States were surveyed about their perceptions of fear (N=1,572) using the Chapman Survey of American Fears (Bader, 2014).

RESULTS: Secondary analysis identified the correlation between four variables associated with media and fear. These four variables were statistically significant and had positive correlation amongst one another, labeled as crime-related television consumption, fear of crime, and concern for internet related problems.

BACKGROUND

- Discourse of fear is the extensive communication, symbolic awareness and expectation of danger as central features of the effective environment (Altheide & Michalowski, 1999).
- The three dimensions of the fear of crime are cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Cognitive focuses on one’s belief of their likelihood of victimization, emotional spotlights the individuals’ feelings about crime, and lastly, behavioral views how people respond to the fear and risk of victimization (Kohm, Shelley, Waid-Lindberg, Weinrath & Dobbs, 2012).
- Demographic factors such as age, gender, race and situational factors all mediate crime media’s influence on the community.
- Crime related television can be separated into two categories, true crime and fictional crime.
- Television consumption is a primary source of information about crime and impacts ones perception of fear.
- Exposure to news media coverage consistently shows signs of fear related to internet related problems stemming from news media coverage and suggest that the concept of online exposure itself takes on different meanings in different social environments of online interaction similar to news media.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Research Question 1: As crime-related television consumption increases, will fear of crime increase?
- Research Question 2: As crime-related television consumption increases, will concern about internet-related problems increase?

METHODS

Sample : 1,572 non-institutionalized adults (ages 18+) residing in the United States.

- Females 49.9%
- Males 50.1%

Measures: Chapman Survey of American Fears (Bader, 2014)

- Fear of crime was comprised of questions regarding being mugged, identity theft, stalking, being murdered, police brutality, being raped, victimization of hate crimes/ random mass shootings and fear of strangers.
- Crime-related media consumption was comprised of ACTUAL CRIME related shows and FICTIONAL CRIME related shows.
- Internet-related problems was comprised of questions regarding government surveillance, corporate surveillance, bullied and humiliated and online sexual predators.
 - Items were measured on four-point Likert scale.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants		
Characteristic	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	788	50.1
Female	785	49.9
Age		
18-24	136	8.6
25-34	207	13.2
35-44	243	15.4
45-54	283	18.0
55-64	356	22.6
75+	5	6.0
Household Income		
Less than \$5,000	27	1.7
\$5,000 to \$7,499	15	1.0
\$7,500 to \$9,999	21	1.3
\$10,000 to \$12,499	40	2.5
\$12,500 to \$14,999	28	1.8
\$15,000 to \$19,999	54	3.4
\$20,000 to \$24,999	71	4.5
\$25,000 to \$29,999	77	4.9
\$30,000 to \$34,999	80	5.1
\$35,000 to \$39,999	74	4.7
\$40,000 to \$49,999	109	6.9
\$50,000 to \$59,999	146	9.3
\$60,000 to \$74,999	158	10.0
\$75,000 to \$84,999	114	7.2
\$85,000 to \$99,999	104	6.6
\$100,000 to \$124,999	206	13.1
\$125,000 to \$149,999	100	6.4
\$150,000 to \$174,999	58	3.7
\$175,000 or more	91	5.8
Racial Self Identification		
White, Non-Hispanic	1,147	72.9
Black Non- Hispanic	150	9.5
Other, Non-Hispanic	68	4.3
Hispanic	10	.10
2+ Races, Non-Hispanic	49	.31

RESULTS

- A positive correlation was found between fear of crime and shows about fictional crime ($r = .101$, $p < .01$) and between fear of crime and shows about actual crimes ($r = .172$, $p < .01$).
- A positive correlation was found regarding fear of crime and internet-related problems ($r = .50$, $p < .01$) in addition to fear of crime and crime-related television consumption.
- The analysis indicated that crime-related television consumption has a statistically significant correlation to concern for internet-related problems with a positive correlation between internet-related problems and television shows about fictional crime ($r = .098$, $p < .01$) and internet-related problems and actual crimes ($r = .169$, $p < .01$).

Table 2 Correlation coefficients table of television media consumption, fear of crime and Internet related problems				
	Fear of Crime	IRP	SAFC	SAAC
Fear of crime				
IRP	.500**			
SAFC	.101**	.098**		
SAAC	.172**	.169**	.440**	

** The Correlation is significant ($p < 0.01$) , IRP internet related problems , SAFC shows about fictional crime , SAAC shows about actual crime.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- H1 Supported: Consistent with our predictions.
- RQ1: As crime-related television consumption increases, fear of crime increases.
- H2 Supported: Consistent with our predictions.
- RQ2: As crime-related television consumption increases, concern for internet-related problems increases.

DISCUSSIONS

- Participants watching crime related television shows of actual crimes were also watching crime-related television of fictional crimes, which had an increase in their perceived fear of crime.
- The ultimate strength within our study is that our findings are consistent with the findings within our review of literature.
- Factors such as perceived risk of victimization, female gender, and/or social media use achieve greater variation among feelings towards fear of crime (Kohm et al., 2012).
- Development of fear related to crime news is prominently associated to the time spent watching crime related genres of television and internet sources.

Limitations

- Lack of questions regarding both news & media exposure and internet use.
- Connection between how the increase in internet use will increase fear of crime.

Real-world Applications

- Supported the beliefs when fear in children related to crime news is associated with time spent watching crime-related genres of television and internet sources.

Suggestions for Future Research

- Investigate further into the affects of internet-related crime media consumption and the fear of crime.
- Media consumption should include internet and social influence because media consumption alone does not predict higher levels of fear.